RANCHO SANTA ANA BOTANIC GARDEN

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NOLINA PARRYI
PARRY'S NOLINA

Prepared
by
RANCHO SANTA ANA BOTANIC GARDEN
of the
NATIVE PLANTS OF CALIFORNIA

Santa Ana Canyon
Orange County
California

NOLINA PARRYI

PARRY'S NOLINA

Liliaceae — Lily Family

Large perennial arising from a large cluster of small rope-like roots. Stems of old plants often several feet high, unbranched, but usually in clumps of several due to basal off-shoots. Leaves dull green, 2-5 ft. long, forming a dense crown, slightly concave, stiff or flexuous, serrately margined, about 1 inch wide, arising from a broad clasping base and tapering to a sharp point. Staminate (male) and pistillate (female) flowers borne on separate plants (dioecious). Inflorescence a compound panicle of thousands of flowers borne on a huge stalk often 4-6 in. in diameter and many feet high. In early stages of development the flower stalk appears as a huge stem of asparagus, each lateral branch of which is covered with a pale greenish (later straw-colored) bract 3-4 in. wide and 8-15 in. long. The flowering stalk develops at the rate of several inches per day. Staminate flower borne on whitish slender pedicel about ¼ inch long, jointed at middle; perianth creamy white, its 6 segments all reflexed forming a low bowl-shaped flower about ¼ in. across, the 3 outer segments (petals) essentially alike, that is elliptic, 1-nerved; stamens 6, exserted, anthers greenish, 2-celled, versatile; ovary abortive (occasionally developing). Pistillate flower with perianth similar to that of the staminate, but segments smaller, greenish and not reflexed; stamens 6 (abortive or occasionally fertile); ovary 3-celled, greenish, stigmas borne on a very short style; seed pod (capsule) about ½ inch broad, each of the 3 cells developing into an oval, flattened, straw-colored, papery wing containing 1-2 rounded tan seeds 1/8 inch in diam. Capsules rupture irregularly.

The genus Nolina (honoring Nolin, a French agriculturist) was erected in 1803 by André Michaux, French botanist, who lived in America for a number of years. The first species was Nolina georgiana of the southeastern United States. A total of about 25 species are known in North America, the bulk of which are found in Mexico. Two are native to California. Nolina is closely related to Dasylirion, while in a superficial way resembling Dracaena.

Nolina Parryi was described in 1879 by S. Watson, American botanist, from specimens collected by C. C. Parry in 1876 from "the western border of the San Bernardino Desert". It is probable that his specimens were collected on the desert slopes of

the San Bernardino Mts. Parry's Nolina ranges from the desert slopes of the San Bernardino Mts. to San Felipe, San Diego Co., extending coastward on the west slopes of the San Jacinto and Santa Ana Mts. In the Colorado Desert it has been found in the Little San Bernardinos, the Chuckwallas and the Eagle Mts. In the Mojave Desert it is thus far known only from the Kingston Mts. It also grows in Arizona and Baja California.

In the wild Parry's Nolina grows associated with Piñons and Junipers in its desert habitats, while toward the coast it is found with chaparral plants. It is often mistaken by amateurs for a species of Yucca, especially when not in flower or fruit. Old plants of this Nolina are often spectacular when in flower or fruit, since they often grow on prominent rocky ledges where they are visible for many miles, silhouetted against the skyline like huge sentinels. In favorable seasons the plants break into bloom in April and May and ripen their seeds in September and October. The flower stalk arises from the center of the huge cluster of stiffish leaves and grows at the rate of several inches per day. Conditions for the production of outstanding specimens seem to be ideal in the Kingston Mts. where we have measured some gigantic individuals, the figures for one of which are given below: total height 16 ft.; trunk diam. 3 ft.; length of leaves 5 ft., making a plant over 12 ft. in diameter; flower stalk about 12 ft. long, 6 in. diam., with flower portion about 6 ft. long and 42 in. in width.

Parry's Nolina has been under cultivation at the Garden since 1928, when seeds were collected in the Santa Ana Mts. The plants are easily started in outside seed beds and grow to planting size in less than a year. They prefer a rocky, well-drained soil, but are able to succeed in heavy soil if given little or no water after the first season. When they are 7 to 8 years old they begin blooming and are likely to continue each year thereafter. Pistillate plants are the most attractive, since the straw-colored fruits remain on the flowering stalks for many months.

Nolina Parryi has been little used in California gardens, but where sufficient space can be given it offers interesting possibilities for variety in a cactus or desert garden.

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Of The Native Plants of California.

Established 1927

In Memory of John W. Bixby

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Purpose: A scientific institution devoted to the growth and study of the native plants of California for their botanical, horticultural and popular features.

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MAIL ADDRESS

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